

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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R 081540Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8426
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 8140

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJ: LEADERSHIP NOTES: BREZHNEV AND PODGORNYY

1. SUMMARY: BREZHNEV MAY ASSUME POSITION OF CHIEF OF
STATE JUNE 16/17. RUMORS SURROUNDING REASONS FOR
PODGORNYY'S OUSTER CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE IN MOSCOW,
AS DO STORIES ABOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER POLITBURO
MEMBERS IN THE AFFAIR AND POSSIBLE ENSUING CADRE CHANGES.
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END SUMMARY.

2. "PRESIDENT" BREZHNEV: THE SUPREME SOVIET MEETS
JUNE 16 FOR ITS NORMAL, SEMI-ANNUAL, TWO DAY
SESSION. BREZHNEV MAY WELL CHOOSE THIS OPPORTUNITY
TO ASSUME PODGORNYY'S JOB AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDUM
OF THE SUPREME SOVIET, THE HEAD OF STATE. ACCORDING

TO A NUMBER OF SOURCES, BREZHNEV WANTS TO BE WELCOMED IN FRANCE ON JUNE 20 AS CHIEF OF STATE. SEVERAL SOURCES POINT OUT THAT HIS PROJECTED TRIPS TO THE US AND FRG MAY WELL NOT TAKE PLACE IN THIS JUBILEE YEAR. SOME OBSERVERS FEEL THAT BREZHNEV'S VANITY MAKES HIM WANT TO MAKE AT LEAST ONE TRIP IN THE WEST AS HEAD OF STATE. CERTAINLY THERE IS NO REASON WHY HE CANNOT ASSUME THE POSITION NOW; THE ONLY OTHER LOGICAL OCCASIONS COMING UP SOON ARE THE SPECIAL SUPREME SOVIET SESSION SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER (TO ADOPT THE CONSTITUTION) OR THE NOVEMBER CELEBRATIONS FOR THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION.

3. PODGORNYY'S REMOVAL: HOW? MOSCOW'S HIGHLY ACTIVE RUMOR MILL HAS PRODUCED A NUMBER OF STORIES PURPORTING TO DETAIL THE EVENTS IN THE POLITBURO AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM MEETINGS AT WHICH PODGORNYY LOST HIS JOB. ONE STORY, ABOUT THE POLITBURO SESSION, HAS SUSLOV IN THE CHAIR, WITH BREZHNEV EXPOUNDING ON THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN. PODGORNYY WAS TOLD THAT THIS WAS GOING TO BE HIS NEW JOB. HE REFUSED AND ROMANOV THEN GOT UP AND OBSERVED THAT IT WAS TIME FOR PODGORNYY TO GO. HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE NOTED THAT THE VOTE FOR PODGORNYY'S ELECTION TO THE POLITBURO AT THE 25TH PARTY CONGRESS HAD BEEN THE LOWEST FOR ANY MEMBER, AND ADDUCED THIS AS EVIDENCE THAT PODGORNYY HAD LOST THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENCE OF THE PARTY. OTHER VERSIONS OF THIS STORY HAVE ROMANOV STATING THAT THE OTHER MAN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LIST OF VOTES, POLYANSKIY, HAD ALREADY BEEN REMOVED FROM THE POLITBURO AND THAT IT WAS NOW PODGORNYY'S TURN. IN ANOTHER VERSION, ROMANOV MERELY READ THE VOTE TOTALS FOR ALL THE POLITBURO MEMBERS AND DID NOT COMMENT FURTHER. WHATEVER THE VERSION, THE POLITBURO REPORTEDLY VOTED RIGHT AFTER ROMANOV'S INTERVENTION AND PODGORNYY WAS OUSTED.

4. ACCORDING TO A WESTERN DIPLOMAT, THE OUSTER OF PODGORNYY WAS NOT PLANNED. ALL HAD ASSUMED THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT HIS DOWNGRADING WITH GOOD GRACE AND HIS REFUSAL TOOK EVERYONE BY SURPRISE. ONE VERSION WAS THAT THE POLITBURO HAD TO ADJOURN ITS MEETING OVERNIGHT WHILE THE NEW PROBLEMS CREATED BY HIS SUDDEN OUSTER WERE RESOLVED. WHILE WE HAVE NO WAY OF VERIFYING THIS, WE NOTE

THAT THE CC PLENUM OCCURED ON A TUESDAY RATHER
THAN ON A MONDAY AS IS OFTEN THE CASE (THE CC
MEMBERS ASSEMBLE IN MOSCOW DURING THE WEEKEND.)

5. PODGORNY'S REMOVAL. WHY? IT IS INCREASINGLY
TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT IT WAS DISAGREEMENT OVER A
SPECIFIC CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION THAT PRECIPITATED
PODGORNY'S LEAVING OFFICE. NOW THAT HE IS GONE,
A NUMBER OF STORIES SUGGESTING THAT HE AND BREZHNEV
HAD LONG GOTTEN ALONG BADLY, ARE SURFACING. SEVERAL
RUMORS OF PAST DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN PODGORNY AND

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 8140

E.O. 11652: GDS

BREZHNEV, SOME DATING BACK TO BEFORE THE 25TH PARTY

CONGRESS, HAVE MADE THE ROUNDS, AND IN ONE VERSION, BREZHNEV FELT THAT THE REFUSAL TO GIVE UP THE PRESIDENCY WAS THE LAST STRAW. ANOTHER VERSION OF THE EVENT, HOWEVER, THAT WE HAD FROM TWO FOREIGN JOURNALISTS, HAS BREZHNEV AND SUSLOV COOPERATING TO OUST PODGORNYY; BREZHNEV BECAUSE HE WANTED PODGORNYY'S
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SUPREME SOVIET JOB, AND SUSLOV BECAUSE HE SAW THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL FOR ONE OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP AND WAS DETERMINED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE HIMSELF. SINCE PODGORNYY "REPRESENTED" NO PARTICULAR CONSTITUENCY IN SOVIET SOCIETY, IT WAS EASIER TO DISPOSE OF HIM THAN ANY OF THE OTHERS. (STILL ANOTHER ACCOUNT WHICH PLACES PODGORNYY'S DOWNFALL IN CONTEXT OF BREZHNEV-SUSLOV RIVALRY WITHOUT SPECIFYING CASUAL RELATIONSHIP REPORTED SEPTTEL).

6. WHO BENEFITS? BREZHNEV CLEARLY IS THE BIG WINNER IN THIS CURRENT ROUND OF HIGH-LEVEL CHANGES. THE MAN WHO IS EVENTUALLY CHOSEN AS FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN WILL ALSO BENEFIT, SINCE HIS POSITION WILL ENSURE HIM A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC EXPOSURE. ONE THESIS IS THAT SHCHERBITSKIY WILL BE BROUGHT FROM THE UKRAINE TO FILL THAT JOB. THE REASONS ADDUCED FOR THAT INCLUDE THE FACT THAT WITH PODGORNYY'S DEPARTURE THERE ARE NO UKRAINIANS OCCUPYING POLITBURO LEVEL JOBS AT THE CENTER. SHCHERBITSKIY WOULD PRESUMABLY COME TO MOSCOW FOLLOWING THE ADOPTION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION, WHEN THE NEW POST WAS CREATED. ANOTHER STORY HAS IT THAT IT IS ROMANOV WHO WILL MOVE TO MOSCOW, AND ONE VERSION OF THE ROMANOV THESIS, HIS NOMINATION AS FIRST DEPUTY SUPREME SOVIET CHAIRMAN WILL BE THE REWARD FOR HIS ROLE IN PODGORNYY'S OUSTER. WERE EITHER MAN TO MOVE TO MOSCOW AND TAKE THIS HIGH VISIBILITY JOB, IT WOULD BE A CLEAR STEP UP. EACH IS YOUNG ENOUGH SO THAT THE PROMOTION COULD BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIRST MOVES IN THE GLACIAL BREZHNEV SUCCESSION. (APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDUM CAN PRESUMABLY OCCUR ONLY IN THE FALL, AFTER THE NEW CONSTITUTION IS ADOPTED.)
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